



# DEARLY HAVE I BOUGHT IT

An Elder Scrolls Women's Day Anthology

ENOLEZDRATA • LADY NEREVAR • LEMON-M • PLAVIGMAZ • RAVNIE  
SHAYNA MOON • SPARKLESHIELD • SERPENTWINED • TORI SCHAFFER • WYV



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THE WISE WOMAN'S CHOICE — ENOLEZDRATA



# INTRODUCTION

## — LADY NEREVAR

The first character to speak in an Elder Scrolls game is a woman. Although Emperor Uriel VII and Jagar Tharn are illustrated in Arena's introductory scroll, it is Ria Silmane's pixelated ghost that welcomes us to the world of Tamriel and tells us that we must save it. It is she who instructs us how to escape our prison, guides us on our ten-year journey around the continent, and, finally, reveals the secret of how to defeat Tharn for good.

In the twenty-six years since, the series has introduced many more great female characters.

Conflicted, complicated women like Barenziah, who are torn between what the world says they must be and what they wish they were. Divisive women like Almalexia, a mother and hero to some, a narcissistic spurned lover to others. Women like Alchemy, who give up everything to be true to themselves. Women like Valsirenn and Serana, who work to save the world, and those like Clivia Tharn and Veya, who aim to end it. Those like Hestra, Ayrenn, and Alessia who are symbols of hegemony, and those like Mehra Milo, Gormlaith Golden-Hilt, and Alessia (again) who stand against it.

Women like our characters, as varied in appearance, personality, history, and motivation as their millions of players.

This collection of art and writing is a small ode to all these women, and all those yet to come.





# LETTERS BETWEEN SISTERS

## — TORI SCHAFER

Dear Alchemy,

I must confess, it's strange to write your new name atop this letter. Still, I suppose I had many years to grow accustomed to your former one; you must excuse me if it takes a few more to feel a similar familiarity with Alchemy.

I'm sure that you wish to hear all about my new position. As expected, there's little time to rest now that I'm officially assistant to the Sapiarch of Artifice. I'm asked to record lectures, organize notes, so on and so forth. I won't bore you with the details, but suffice to say I've found little difficulty with my assigned tasks.

However, I will admit that I often find myself struggling to keep up with my new colleagues. I had always thought myself intelligent and well read, but now realize just how woefully ignorant I truly am. And whenever I'm asked to voice an opinion, it's as if my tongue suddenly turns to lead and I'm unable to utter a coherent thought. And to think that I once scoffed at anyone who was unable to keep up with my intellect. It is rather humbling, to say the least.

More than ever do I wish that I possessed even an ounce of your natural wit and grace. It seems you stole every bit of Mother's charm when we were born, and I was only left with Father's sullen disposition. Whereas you can dazzle crowds, I find myself barely able to stand out amongst my own peers. Normally I'd hole myself in my room and simply attend to my studies, but there is no denying that a certain social etiquette must be maintained if I wish to advance beyond a mere assistant. In truth, any advice you may have on the matter would be most welcomed.

I'm rambling. You always make me ramble, even when you're not around. How do you manage it?

Now, despite sounding like a petulant child, I do want to know how you're faring over in Rellenthil. And this time I want the entire truth of it. No more secrets between sisters, agreed? If I'm to bare my soul to you, I expect the same treatment in return.

Yours Always,

Rinyde

## LETTERS BETWEEN SISTERS

Dearest Rinyde,

My heart aches to think of you alone in that stuffy college, surrounded by dullards who do not see you for the shining beacon of loveliness that you are. If you find yourself unnoticed, it is simply because your colleagues have their heads too firmly lodged in their rear-ends.

My advice? Continue to be your delightful self. If there's anyone of worth among your peers, they'll eventually see that a diamond shines among mere glass baubles. And if you do find yourself fed up with such company, as I'm sure I would, make your way to Rellenthil for an evening of theater to lift your spirits. I'll always be ready with a bottle of wine and a willing ear.

Everything is going splendidly here in the Manor of Masques. I've been selected as the leading lady of our next production, an entirely original piece inspired by certain current events that have befallen our homeland. I won't say too much about my role for you will of course be attending our premiere production. Suffice to say, I do strike a lovely figure in black.

There is also something I'd like to confess. Your letter spoke of my many talents: my wit, my charm, my ability to stand out amongst a crowd. And while I do so love your words of admiration, I'm afraid that I don't quite fit upon your pedestal.

I've never had your courage. While you speak your mind with conviction and strength, I hide behind clever words. I always have. I played whatever part best suited my audience, whether that was an obedient son, a mighty mage, a studious scholar. And when I found those roles too heavy a burden to bare all I could do was run. I didn't have the courage to tell you how I truly felt, to face you when I most needed to.

That's your strength, Rinyde. Even if others do not wish to hear it you'll say what matters most. If you desire my wit, then I humbly request an ounce of your resolve. I believe that such an exchange would be more than fair.

Lovingly Yours,

Alchemy

## LETTERS BETWEEN SISTERS

Dear Alchemy,

I now know to read your letters in private, for your latest correspondence had me blubbering like a babe. I was luckily able to excuse myself from the Sapriach's office before the tears started to fall, but still. Lesson learned.

You speak of my courage and conviction, but the truth is that it doesn't take much of either to do what everyone expects of you. I was happy to follow our family's laid path, thinking only where my next footstep should land. Meanwhile you were looking up at the sky, thinking of what you could be, what you wished to be. And my eyes were so firmly locked forward that I never noticed that your gaze had wandered.

You're far braver than I could ever hope to be. You left everything behind, faced so much hardship, worked so hard in order to start your new life. If one of us must be admired, let it be my brave sister who defied every design laid upon her to be true to herself.

And here I was, plotting to take you away from all of it. I was horribly selfish, Alchemy. I'm so sorry. I told myself that I was doing what was best for you, for all of Summerset, but that wasn't true at all. I was only thinking of myself. How nervous I was to become a sapriach's apprentice, how much I wanted you by my side. And all along you were the one suffering most.

Yet you forgave me, and clasped me in your arms, and said you still loved me. And I will always be grateful for that, for I now realize more than ever that I couldn't bear the thought of losing you. Truly losing you, not just your presence by my side but the love in your heart. It may take many more letters and many more years to make up for what I've done, but let me start by saying that I'm proud to be your sister and I will always love you.

Oh, and before I forget! While I would love to attend your performance, I'm afraid I won't be able to make it. The Sapriachs don't tend to approve of time away for new apprentices. You'll have to let me know how it goes.

Yours Forever,

Rinyde



## LETTERS BETWEEN SISTERS

Sweetest Rinyde,

For once, I don't quite know what to say. I may be able to make you ramble and cry, but only you can make this actress at a loss for words. A rare gift.

I'll admit, I was resentful of the future you saw for us. Distrustful that you would ever truly accept me. But you've shown me nothing but love since I've opened my heart to you, and so it's time for such feelings to come to a close. Let us not dwell on the past, dear sister. Your acceptance of who I am now means more to me than anything. And allow me to echo your sentiment; whatever you do, whoever you shall become, I will always be there for you. Short of marrying a Sload.

I thought I would always be an outcast, but reconnecting with you has given me hope that needn't be the case. One day I shall return to our family home. Not tomorrow perhaps, but someday. Our parents may not be as readily accepting as you were, but I wish to tell the entire truth of it, just as I told you. And I hope when that day comes that you will be by my side.

Besides, you may not always want to follow in our family's laid path. Perhaps one day you'll even wish to join me in the House of Reveries. And while it's true you could not act if the fate of Summerset depended on it, worry not. I have a feeling you'd make for an amazing stagehand.

Speaking of my lovely troupe, I've thought long and hard about your inability to attend our latest production. As that obviously won't do, I've made inquiries about holding an exclusive showing within the College of Sapriachs. After all, the school is quite prominent in our story's plot, and I'm sure such a performance would do wonders for morale after that horrible attack. Don't you agree?

With All the Love in My Heart,

Alchemy

P.S. I've caught word of our mutual friend. It appears they've been off slaying Dragons, if the rumours are to be believed! Really, I'm not sure how they get themselves caught up in such adventures. Perhaps they'll visit soon and regale me with the tale.

QUEEN ARZHELA — RAVNIE





# THE FROZEN HEART

## — LEMON-M

Urag gro-Shub had taught her a spell that would lead her to what she sought. As a Redguard, Penelope was taught to distrust magic growing up, but she needed every bit of help if she was to find the mad man in the ice fields. She contemplated her hand, hoping it would be enough, before sliding on a glove and flexing her fingers.

She affixed a wool cap over her short black hair and checked the hooks of her backpack. Last night, her room at the inn had been strewn with the trip's supplies— now they were packed tight and heavy after a week of preparations.

There was a knock on the door. Urag, the old librarian from the mage's college, had arrived. The boat he'd procured for her was ready. Penelope donned on her equipment quickly, leaving her sheath and quiver belt for last. Shouldering her bag and bow, she went to meet Urag at the inn's entrance.

They stepped out to gloomy Winterhold's main and only street, where morning snow fell onto last day's slush.

"You sure you'll be able to handle yourself out there?" Urag eyed the sky.

"Don't have many other choices, my man," she said, looking at the weather with equal distaste. Before this whole ordeal, she'd been a forester in the Jerall Mountains, no part of which prepared her to navigate the Sea of Ghosts in a dinghy.

The morning was quiet. They walked down the street as the townspeople went about their business, but she felt watched. The faster she got out of town, the better. After aiding Legate Rikke at the battle of Whiterun, all eyes had turned to the Imperial-aligned Dragonborn, and now she was deep in Stormcloak territory. Rikke warned her: The Dragonborn was a legendary hero to the Nords; her allegiance to the Empire would be a betrayal to some.

She'd spent the last few days pretending to be a mage visiting the college. Pulling her cowl closer to her face, she picked up her pace.

Up ahead, she saw a woman point at her. It was the inn's hostess. Behind her was a man in armor and a bear pelt on his shoulders. He was flanked by a few more people in the Stormcloak uniform.

Penelope glanced back— the hold's guards were closing in from behind. The Stormcloak

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commander marched forward, war axe in hand. "Halt," he called.

She complied. Off to the side, Urag stood in confusion.

"By order of Jarl Ulfric Stormcloak, I am here to arrest the false Dragonborn. Resistance will only hasten your execution."

"I don't know who you're looking for," Penelope lied, a sneer on her lips.

"Don't screw with me!" the commander yelled. He broke into a charge.

"Feim!" Penelope shouted. A breath filled her lungs; her body faded like a ghost. The people gasped.

With one last glance at Durag, Penelope ran at the commander.

He skidded to a halt, eyes wide, and swung his axe at her. It passed through Penelope with only a whisper of resistance. She was untouchable, but only for a moment.

The street led to the cliff that ended the town. She looked back at her pursuers: a handful of old guardsmen and mismatched young soldiers. Probably all that was left of Winterhold, she thought bitterly. "Get that witch!" the commander yelled.

Rikke had warned her: Don't create martyrs. If Penelope fought Stormcloaks on her own, it wouldn't be a noble fight— she'd just be a foreigner killing the sons and daughters of Skyrim.

She ran with all her might, willing the shout to last long enough for what she was about to do. The College of Winterhold loomed larger and larger beyond the cliff. She ducked underneath the arch of its bridge and jumped into the precipice.

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One day passed. Strong winds blew across the ice fields and scattered islets of the vast Sea of Ghosts, through which Penelope trekked, pulling herself forward with the aid of a stick. The Stormcloaks didn't pursue her beyond the shabby docs at the shore— by the time they'd reached it, she was beyond the College's shadow. She didn't stop running for a long time.

The ice stretched for miles, defying all natural logic; it formed in big patches over the sea even during the warm months. The feeble glow of the guiding spell traced a path on the surface, sometimes going over darker spots beneath the slush, which signified thinner ice. She feared the spell would stop at one of these, marking mad Sigmus' watery grave.

Somewhere in that sea was her only hope of finding an Elder Scroll, which held the secret to killing Alduin.

False Dragonborn... She stopped and looked back to where she'd come from, but the shore was too far away. It was just her and the horizon and the darkening sky.

It had been almost a year since it all began. She was a stranger to the land, and despite who



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she turned out to be, she worked on the margins, traversing the frozen heart of Skyrim and its people alone. She wondered whether it would have been easier if she'd been a child of the land— would the wind's icy touch not have ingrained itself on her skin like thousand needles, always pushing against her? Would she have understood its gods better?

She gritted her teeth, throwing one last glare in the direction of the shore before moving on. She needed to rest for the night.

Up ahead, an islet rose out of the water. Penelope heaved herself forward, muscles aching. She stabbed the stick on the ground— the ice cracked. In an instant it splintered along a fault line, and the ground shifted. She almost stumbled.

The floes began to drift with the current. Ahead, one flipped vertically and was crushed by the others.

"Fuck!" she cursed, turning towards the islet. She strode over the gaps between the floes, keeping low for balance, each gap growing larger than the last one. The ice sank when she stepped on it, threatening to give out. She dropped the stick and moved as fast as possible. The islet was so close.

The ice gave out underneath her. She lunged and grabbed onto the next surface, but she hit the water and her vision went white. Her clothes soaked up water, dragging her over the edge. She clawed at the surface, any grip she found quickly giving away, until the water reached her neck. Her glove slipped off, and she dug into the ice.

Her breathing was ragged and quick. Everything was a blur of dark grey. She thrashed with all her might, until her body was parallel to the surface. In a moment of clarity, she kicked harder and heaved herself onto the floe.

With a grunt, she began to crawl on the ice, inching towards land under the weight of her equipment. She fell into the shallow water between the ice and the shore, but finally dragged herself onto solid ground.

Breathing hurt like daggers in her lungs. As if seized by madness, she shouldered the backpack off and clawed at her garments until she was in her chemise. She shook violently against the wind. All that surrounded her was vast whiteness, no form of shelter in sight. The dark of the night had closed in. Yet, instead of hopelessness, she felt an anger she'd never felt before, more blinding than the freezing water.

She roared, wordless.

"I will not die here!" she yelled. The wind lashed at her. She forced herself up, turning to the direction of the shore. "I am Dragonborn! I stand here by right of birth!"

The fire was in her chest. Its heat rose and fell like an ember. She had only ever used it to destroy, projected out, dangerous and powerful, a gift from the gods. But the word was in her throat; it had always been hers to command. Standing firm, she breathed, "Yol."

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Warmth spread from her throat down to her limbs, filling her lungs and belly, melting the ice off her eyelashes. The shivering stopped, and as strength and clarity returned to her, she roared fire into the sky.

The cold couldn't touch her anymore, so the wind changed direction. The clouds rolled away, revealing tendrils of color painting themselves on the sky. The lights, bright blue and purple, shimmered and shifted above her. They lit Kynareth's realm. She slowly traced them with her sight, breathless, until her eyes fell on a spot further ahead on a long patch of ice and land. There, a tiny spec of red flame flickered in the night. A lonely outpost in the ice.

She stared at it for a long time. Behind her, the ice she had traversed had completely dispersed, leaving dark waters underneath, but the preternatural magic of the sea would soon freeze it once again. She gathered her things, shouldering her bag and dragging her clothes, and marched on.





# WARDER

## — SPARKLESHIELD

“She’s asked to meet with you.”

Sings-Many-Songs recalled Modryn laughing at the look on their face. Was it incredulousness, or surprise? Too distant to remember now. A pit in their stomach, their breath caught as if on a branch; the former Blackwood Company building sat comfortably in the humid air of Leyawiin, as if it were expecting them. As if its doors would open like a mouth to say ‘back so soon?’

They didn’t expect to set foot in there again, or to face something just as unsettling as the discovery of the sick Hist tree. But the floors no longer creaked with the footsteps of the Blackwood members – instead, Sing’s fellow Fighters Guild brothers and sisters were milling about. Occasionally they would brush past and offer a smile. A tired greeting. A pat on the shoulder.

“Do you know where Vilena is?” They asked one of the porters. The answer was upstairs, in one of the leader’s rooms. They hadn’t ventured that far before.

It was clear that saxhleel once inhabited this place. Cyrodiilic walls were still flooded with the neighboring marsh’s influence. Swamp flora was stuck in planters littered throughout the hallways and against windows, oftentimes covering them as vines crept their way up the glass. It was decidedly less humid than when they had first broken in, too. The landwalking races likely found it stuffy and aired it out, though it would only do so much in a place like Leyawiin.

Something about it all only added to Sing’s unease. They hoped the plants would not be killed. They hadn’t dared ask if the guild had dealt with the basement yet. Had noted signs of fire damage on the bottom floor, and no longer heard the cries of the tree. Merely a week or two, but it felt so far in the past.

Vilena was waiting for them, sitting at a small table near one of the sickly-yellow windows. So odd to see her out of uniform, slumped forward and propped up on her elbows. Any passerby would mistake the former Fighter’s Guild leader as a simple commoner with greying hair. And yet, Sings was intimidated far worse than back when

she was barking orders and sword fighting.

"I'm relieved you didn't blow me off," She said. Sings stiffly sat themselves down across from her. "I wasn't sure if you'd come. Something to drink? Water's here, but I have a splash of wine somewhere, I'm sure."

"Thank you. I do not drink."

Vilena poured the pitcher and pushed the cup in their direction. She chuckled. "Better woman than me."

They sat in tense silence for a few moments. Sings staring in uncomfortable anticipation, Vilena taking her time to sip some water and look through the tinted glass into the too-hot day outside.

"Did you call me on guild business?" They finally ventured to ask. Vilena nodded, pushing the pitcher away and clasping her hands in front of her.

"Of a sort, yes. But there was something else first."

Sings felt a stab of panic tear through their insides. Briefly, they wondered if there was something in the water. Poison? Would she be that vengeful? Certainly she had little to lose, and they hadn't seen her pour her own cup. Good not to drink it, just to be safe.

...Had all the dealings with the Mythic Dawn really made them this paranoid?

"I feel it's obvious, but I wanted to apologize to you myself. For everything. After the events at Forsaken Mine, I was inconsolable. But it's no excuse for sending an innocent woman to jail."

Their eyes widened, unable to speak. Somehow, they hadn't anticipated this. So much had happened since then, they hadn't the time or energy to blame someone for it. "It- It was an understandable mistake, lady Donton. Modryn and I-

"No, no." She said, cutting them off. "I know how foolish I look, and it's because I am a fool. Modryn was acting for the best interest of the guild and my son. As were you. If I had been paying the Fighter's Guild the attention that it deserved, I would've known you could have never been a Blackwood spy."

Sings cleared their throat. "An argonian member on unofficial business, showing up at an attack site from the Blackwood Company...it is not a difficult leap."

"For the uninformed. Modryn tells me you've been a member for a long time now. How old were you when you joined?"

"Sixteen. I was on apprenticeship for one of your smiths at the time."

Vilena nodded, tilting forward. "Sixteen. And it's been at least another seventeen years since. Your record is impeccable. You're a warder of the guild and a trusted shieldmate of Modryn's.

You've dedicated so much time to us."

The older woman sighed and leant back in her chair again, brushing a piece of hair behind her ear. "And yet," She continued mournfully, "I knew none of it. If that isn't a testament to how out of touch I'd become, I don't know what is. You are far too kind to be anything but furious with me."

Sings didn't know what to say. Yes, it indeed had been an injustice. But life had become a series of such things as of late. What was another? They thought of the sick tree, being mistreated by greed and consumption. The emperor choking with a dagger in his back. Viranus in a puddle of his own blood, barely alive and shivering. Kvatch.

"Lady Donton," They eventually said. "I want you to know that he did not die alone."

"You were with him."

"Yes."

Her eyes squinted as she smiled, sad and knowing. "You're a woman that gives a great amount of effort. I can see it. It is a good quality."

She reached out to put a wrinkled hand on top of their own. "But please remember this is not solely your burden. I didn't call you here just to ease a guilty conscience."

Vilena straightened and reached into her breast pocket, pulling out an envelope and setting it before them. "This is a letter for Bruma. Let them know that the Fighter's Guild and I will fight whatever battles they call us for. It's my last declaration as guild Master."

"We're in this together, my dear. I won't be throwing you to the wolves again if I can help it."







# THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF A FLAME

— SHAYNA MOON

In the old days before Skyrim could be called a country, there was a village called Morhold on the shores of the northern sea. The land there was cold and made bitter from the sea water, and the creatures fished out of the black water had strange forms and weren't good for eating. The Jarl of the land was determined to have a people to rule, and so she set a bounty in gold to whoever would make the attempt to farm the acrid frozen lands.

Once such would-be farmer was a Breton called Roloff Hindmoor. He brought his wife Mischa across the land to Morhold and made a homestead with his bounty. After a year of back-breaking work, the little farm in Morhold began to provide a meager crop of tough leafy greens and dense tubers that could be called vegetables.

Mischa tied a wolfskin tight around her shoulders and covered her face tight against the salty frigid air. She carried a woven basket of the greens under one arm to a small half-circle of stalls that formed the Morhold markets.

"I'll have that for the goats for two bits of a septim." Said Hilda Greythorn, Mischa's closest friend in the village, who she sometimes visited to sit and sew with and share stories from the homeland.

"You paid a whole half last week." Mischa said, but she put her basket on the stall anyway.

"I paid half a septim when the sheep would eat them, too. Now they're off them, have any potatoes?"

"Not today. Not for a few weeks." Mischa looked down at Hilda's stall. There was a sheet of parchment fixed to it with a rough iron nail. "What's that?"

"Someone came through and asked if they could put it up. Some elf." Hilda took the basket of greens and put it behind her stall. "Gave me a few bits so I let 'em. Elf gold."

Mischa squinted at the missive. "A meal outside the village?" She read, "And we're all invited?"

"Think you'll go?" Hilda said.

## THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF A FLAME

Raloff wasn't pleased when Mischa asked him.

"What made you think I'd want to join an elf at their table? A true Nord would never."

"We haven't had a proper meal in weeks." Mischa said, standing at their cooking pot where she was trying to coax a shank of tough goat meat to become a proper stew, to no avail.

"And who's fault is that?" One moment his plate was on the table and the next second it was sailing through the air. It struck her face and she turned away, grasping her face tightly.

She was still nursing the bruise a week later when she came to Hilda's stall a week later.

"I'll have that for a septim." Hilda said cheerfully as Mischa set another basket of greens on the stall.

"A septim?" Mischa echoed. She could hardly believe it.

"You wouldn't believe it, after the meal with those elves I've never felt better. They have a kind of- spiritual exercise. It makes you strong." She grinned. "You release everything that's holding you back."

Mischa didn't understand. "Did Arngold go as well?" She asked, naming Hilda's husband. Her friend shook her head and raised a hand, running her palm down one of her dark braids. Mischa thought she saw a small mark on the back of her hand, but it was gone before she could really tell.

"Oh no, he wasn't interested." Hilda shrugged. "And anyway, he's gone south to bring back more livestock. I don't expect him back before spring. Anyway," She added, sliding the septim towards Mischa, "You ought to go tonight. It just down the road and up the hill that overlooks the cliffs. You'll love it."

"Aren't you going?" Mischa asked. She could tell Raloff that Arngold had let her go. That would convince him.

"I've already been." Hilda said. "You go. If Raloff doesn't like it, tell him to come as well!"

Raloff did insist on coming, to Mischa's surprise.

"Don't trust them elves." He grumbled as they climbed the hill.

"It's a hot meal." Mischa insisted, hugging her arms to her chest, bracing against the wind.

They found a loose circle of people standing at the top of the hill. At their center was a figure in a long cloak, speaking to the group. As the person spoke they gestured with their hands and Mischa could see that their skin was deep blue and they wore thick golden rings that shimmered even in the low light of a metal brazier. The brazier also illuminated a blue pillar the height of a nordman, scrawled with blue symbols. Elf symbols, Mischa thought.

"Come, come." Said a human man with a bright red beard, gesturing for them to join the

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circle. Mischa didn't recognize him, but she did recognize several couples from the village, about half a dozen of them all told, plus her and Raloff, the bearded man, and the elf.

The elf raised both hands to the sky, and Mischa could see that their teeth were sharp as they spoke.

"Friends, welcome." They said, "The meal is being prepared, but for now I invite you to join our ritual of welcoming. I have seen this village and what it has to offer, and it strikes me that several of you are carrying heavy burdens." The elf turned and fixed their eyes on Mischa as they spoke. Their eyes were deep red and did not blink.

"You have an opportunity tonight to shed those burdens, to cleanse yourselves and be free."

Mischa heard Raloff scoff behind her but didn't look away from those eyes until they turned away from her. The elf went to the blue pillar and gestured towards it.

"All you must do," They said, "-is place your burden against this holy relic. And all will become clear."

"Where's the meal?" Raloff said loudly, taking a step towards the elf. "All you do is blabber, elf. Your words mean nothing." He turned towards Mischa and reached for her upper arm. Mischa saw him and the pillar behind him, and saw the elf smile wide.

She was fully in her right mind when she took a hand and placed it to Raloff's chest. She gave him a firm shove and he stumbled back until he was braced against the pillar. He raised a hand towards Mischa, but a swirl of bright blue light erupted beneath them and a concussive blast of wind pushed her back and out of the circle.

The man with the bright red beard pressed a sword to her hand and Mischa lunged forward, thinking of every indignity she had suffered since she'd been dragged to this dead rotting rock of a village, everything she'd suffered even before that. She drove the sword into Raloff's chest and then staggered back.

The prince in the gold circlet smiled, and Mischa saw that all of their teeth were dagger sharp. They lifted one leg and kicked over the brazier, spilling hot coals onto the swirl of light. The blue light turned deep red and then orange and yellow, and a wave of flame belched up along the pillar, engulfing Raloff in the blazing heat. He screamed and screamed until the roar of the flames overwhelmed him.

Every woman at the circle sacrificed their husband that night.

The prince knelt down and dipped their fingers into some of the charred fat pooling at the base of the pillar, they turned towards Mischa and took her arm, scrawling the symbol of a clenched fist onto her skin. It stung, but Mischa flexed her fingers and the heat of the fat sunk into her skin and passed.

"Blessed girl." Said the prince, "You are free and your spirit is unleashed. Go forth and spread



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my blessings to your village and the world.”

“Yes.” Mischa nodded, looking at the small sad black charred thing that had been Raloff one last time.

That night, Mischa returned to the town of Morhold and found her little house exactly where she’d left it. The embers in the firepit had dimmed, so she stoked the flames until she had a roaring fire again. Looking down at the symbol on her hand, she felt strength grow in her arms and kept the bellows pumping. The flames licked higher and higher until the heat was searing against Mischa’s skin.

She abandoned the bellows to the flames and stepped backwards out of the little farmhouse. She walked along the road to find that several other buildings were beginning to burn as well. As she was reaching the edge of the village, she found Hilda with soot stains on her hands and dress. They grasped hands without a word and continued down the road as their sad little homes burned behind them.

Boethiah stood at the top of the hill, beckoning the woman of Morhold towards them with open arms.

SCALES LIKE GOLDEN SEPTIMS — SERPENTWINED



Serpentwined

# CONTRIBUTORS

## ANA VALENS

Ana was the sensitivity reader for Letters Between Sisters.

Twitter: acvalens

## ENOLEZDRATA

Enolezdrata is an artist from Russia who loves The Elder Scrolls universe with all her heart.

Patreon: Enolezdrata

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## LADY NEREVAR

Lady Nerevar became obsessed with Morrowind in 2002, and has been an Elder Scrolls fan ever since. She writes, makes art, and administers the Imperial Library.

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## LEMON-M

Lemon-m is a Panamanian woman living in Quebec, so she knows a lot about being cold. She works in video game QA helping lead teams and is an aspiring writer, and has been in the fandom since 2010 when she bought Oblivion by chance.

Twitter: NotMeAgain6

## PLAVIGMAZ

PlaviGmaz is a 25-year old art student from Croatia and has been an Elder Scrolls fan ever since she got introduced to Oblivion in 2008. As an artist, she spends her time creating digital and traditional artwork of landscapes, birds and fantasy worlds.

Deviant Art: PlaviGmaz

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## RAVNIE

Ravnie is a self taught digital artist with a love for video games and roleplay. She fancies dabbling into numerous different art styles, considering as she likes spicing things up through variation.

ArtStation: Ravnie

Deviant Art: Ravnie

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## SHAYNA MOON

As an associate producer, Moon worked with various development teams behind 2018's God of War. She is involved in mentorship and outreach, including volunteering with Amplifying New Voices, a program to help diverse candidates get educated for the gaming industry.

Twitter: qorquiq

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## SERPENTWINED

Femme non-binary artist and writer. They are a long time fan of The Elder Scrolls and have always used it as an inspiration when creating. Always looking for new stories to read and art to enjoy while interacting with the community.

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## TORI SCHAFER

Tori Schafer is a writer and narrative designer with a strong background in epic fantasy role-playing games and award winning diverse character representation. As a former writer for Elder Scrolls Online, she's excited to return to two of her favorite characters and continue their story.

Twitter: Tori\_Schafer

## SPARKLESHIELD

Rosemary (sparkleshield) has been active in the Elder Scrolls fan community for nearly a decade, and it's the reason why she started doing art! She graduated in 2018 with a BA in Illustration, and still loves drawing argonians way too much. In her free time she likes to play pet sim games, continue her Buddhist practice, and collect cassette tapes. Oblivion and Daggerfall are her two favorite TES games. Serana is her favorite Elder Scrolls NPC.

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## WYV

Wyv is a Brazilian artist who was first introduced to The Elder Scrolls on Christmas of 2012, when she was gifted a copy of Skyrim. In the following years, she's become obsessed with the series' vast amount of lore, out-of-game texts, and community stories.☞

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